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Hearst Panel Interview

On Foreign Policy

EXCLUSIVE--Humphrey: Facing Hard Facts

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U. S. policy towards Red China changing? Will the Viet Cong have a seat at a Vietnam peace conference table? These and similar questions are at the core of a great national debate over American foreign policy. To get answers to these vital questions a Hearst panel team of interviewers sat down this week with Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey. Members of the panel were William Randolph Hearst, Jr., Editor-in-Chief of The Hearst Newspapers; Reporter-Columnist Bob Considine, Washington Columnist Marianne Means and Milton L. Kaplan, Editorial Assistant to Mr. Hearst.

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Following is the text of the interview with the Vice President:

Q—Is there anything that would lead you to believe President Kennedy would have handled the Vietnam problem differently than President Johnson?

A—Not to my knowledge. I can recall many conversations we had in the White House over Southeast Asia and over South Vietnam. Of course one cannot foresee what a man would do, so I could not claim to speak for him. But I know of no conclusive evidence that would indicate President Kennedy would have changed our course or would have followed a radically different course.

Q—Critics of American foreign policy include some who feel we are committed to a policy of "Globalism," to step in anywhere a Communist threat arises. Do we have such a commitment?

A—No, we do not. We are not a world policeman. However, in many instances where we see a pattern of Communist aggression, infiltration from without, we do feel that it is in our national interest, at least, to examine that situation carefully and see if it represents a threat to peace, and to decide if it merits our active involvement.

We have acted chiefly where we have treaty commitments, where there has been a resolution of the Congress, or where there has been a pledge on the part of a President as the Chief of State. We have not just intervened lightly and haphazardly around the world.

Q—Isn't it true, Mr. Vice President, that if the UN can cope with one of these situations itself, as in the Congo or Gaza Strip, that suits us?

A—It not only suits us, this is our national policy. We have encouraged the peace-keeping machinery of the United Nations. Our initiative has been very important in the creation of peace-keeping machinery in the UN.

The United Nations, frankly, was incapable of handling the present threat to the peace in Vietnam. It is a matter of record that the Secretary General felt it would be unwise to bring this matter to the General Assembly and to the Security Council. It has only been in recent months that we have pushed the case to the Security Council because we were so anxious to seek a just peace.

Q—Are we still actively initiating peace feelers?

A—We continue to use every channel of diplomacy we have to probe for a chance to talk, to negotiate, to seek peace.

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Q—What signs should we look for that might point to a change in Hanoi's attitude?

A—There are two or three signs that I think are quite important. Whether they will produce results, only time can tell. Number One is that the leadership of the Communist Party of North Vietnam went to the 23rd Party Congress in Moscow. While they were careful in their statements, they did attend, which I think represented an action independent of Peking. They are influenced by Peking. But they are not a total satellite. It has been widely assumed that if Peking was the dominant influence in Hanoi the prospects for any settlement in Vietnam would be more difficult. Many believe that Moscow, which is more sensitive to our power, might be able to exercise a more moderating influence. You must understand however that Moscow wants a Communist victory. There is no doubt about that. The question is: how much danger are they willing to assume to gain that victory? I think the Russians, as of this moment, are a more responsible element in the present struggle than the Chinese Communists and are less inclined to run grave risks.

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VICE PRESIDENT INTERVIEWED — In his office Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey answers questions from a panel headed by William Randolph Hearst, Jr., editor-in-chief of The Hearst Newspapers, seated next to Humphrey. Other panel members, from the left, are reporter-columnist Bob Considine, Milton L. Kaplan, editorial assistant to Mr. Hearst, and Marianne Means, Washington political columnist.

There are indications that all is not well in North Vietnam. North Vietnam is suffering from the bombing attacks. They are having problems with supplies and with manpower. If that is the case, and if the North Vietnamese Communist leadership has some independence of action, it is possible, that under the pain of U. S. and Allied power, North Vietnam may eventually want to bring this matter to the peace table rather than to continue to suffer this punishment.

Q—Is the military view getting through to the President?

A—The chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Wheeler, representing the Joint Chiefs, is involved in all major discussions relating to the military struggle in Vietnam. He is also included in many of the other discussions, because everything is inter-dependent and inter-related.

We have to look at these decisions in terms of their political and diplomatic implications as well as the military implications. We must consider our relationships with other nations, the possible consequences that might stem from an escalated war, the consequences of a confrontation with major powers such as the Soviet Union or China.

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Q—The military doesn't agree with all these decisions?

A—Sometimes there are variations and some differences. These are military men and they are frank to state that their view is that of professional military men. But their point of view is there and I can assure you that the President of the United States has a very high regard for them.

Q—Could it not be argued that some countries have handled their own Communist situation, very much without any help from us and that maybe other countries in the area could do the same thing?

A—I think that it is fair to say that if we can get North Vietnam to stop its active supplying of manpower and material to the Viet Cong, the government of South Vietnam would be able to handle its own troubles within South Vietnam. It would not be done easily or quickly. But they would be able to handle it just as the government of the Philippines was able over the years to suppress

Q—Will we negotiate with the Viet Cong, and under what circumstances?

A—We have said repeatedly that representation of the National Liberation Front, the Viet Cong, would not be an unsurmountable obstacle. That is the diplomatic way of saying that if there can be a peace conference and North Vietnam wishes to bring with it the South Vietnamese branch of the North Vietnamese Communist Party, namely, the National Liberation Front, they will be welcome at the peace table.

Q—With a vote?

A—As a part of the North Vietnamese delegation.

Q—There have been suggestions that we take another look at China, including one by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) that a "Blue-Ribbon" committee be named to examine U. S. policy towards China. What is your reaction?

A—Recent proposals about our relationship with Communist China are not new, but they are thoughtful. This government welcomes constructive proposals on China.

Q—About the Kennedy suggestion.

A—The suggestion that our government give high-level attention to China is excellent. Such attention is, of course, already given. Our government has a high-level task force on Communist China already at work. It has been at work for a considerable period of time. We do, also, have Asian students and Asian scholars and Chinese students and Chinese scholars at work. I do not think China lacks attention within government. I do think it needs more general public attention.

Our policy is one of containing Chinese Communist militancy, but at the same time of trying to keep contact with their people and seeing whether the day might come when mainland China might live within the rules of the charter of United Nations. Our policy could be described as one of containment without isolation.

Q—But we continue to vote against them in UN when the question comes up to discuss Communist China. Do you see a day when we might abstain or vote in favor of discussing China?

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A—I think it is best to answer your question by saying that we are now in what I think is the most interesting and healthy dialogue on Communist China—its place in the world, our relationships to it.

What that dialogue will develop in terms of policy is premature for me to say. I can only say we are not blind to her existence, to her power, to the potential and actual influence she exerts. We are going to take a mature, responsible look at it and make a decision that is based upon our national interests.

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Q—Are there any major segments of the American community, say the West Coast shipping industries, trying to make a change in our China policy?

A—I think there are. When you go to the Rocky Mountains and West Coast areas you will find a difference on the subject of our economic and trade relationships. We need to take a good look at that because the Japanese presently are taking a look at China. The same is true of our Western European allies.

Q—Do you think the Vietnamese question will be item Number One in the coming Congressional campaigns?

A—I think it will be an item that is discussed a great deal, but I am not at all sure that it will have any conclusive or definitive effect on the outcome of the vote. Some will say that we ought to get out. I think that will not be acceptable to the American people. Others will say we ought to do much more. In the main I find most people are not particularly happy with the situation in Vietnam, but they are not quite sure what else we ought to do.

Q—A good deal of attention has been focused on the Central Intelligence Agency recently. Do you think that the Congress ought to have a stronger voice in the control of the CIA?

A—I recommended as a Senator, and I believe it is still a meritorious recommendation, that there be in the legislative branch a counterpart to what we have in the executive branch. In the executive branch we have a National Security Council which is apart from the Cabinet, an executive committee to advise the President. In the Congress we still have the old-fashioned structure where you have separate committees for armed services, foreign relations, appropriations, atomic energy, and so forth. You really need in addition one coordinated, central, joint national security committee, perhaps a joint committee on national security. Who would sit on this? The members of the Congress with the greatest responsibility—that is, the leadership in both House and Senate and the chairman and ranking minority member of the Appropriations, Armed Services, Foreign Relations and Joint Atomic Energy Committees, the key committees

dealing with national security. These men would be what we call "oversight authority."

Q—What would be the advantages of such a group?

A—All matters of national security, including Central Intelligence operations, could be freely discussed with these members. The President, you watch; CIA operations very carefully and the executive branch has good controls. What you have today is a small legislative reviewing committee for intelligence operations which does not include any representation from the foreign relations committees of the Congress. The coordination between executive and legislative can be improved.

Rather than having any separate committee on CIA, it is much better that you try to put the whole oversight of national security into one orderly, combined joint committee where the Congress can discuss the whole range of foreign and national security policy.

Q—The last time we did one of these interviews with you, you were Senate whip, and were handling a civil rights bill. How far have we to go before achieving full equality before the law?

A—We have come a long way. It is most remarkable when you stop to think what the situation was five years ago. It is nothing short of miraculous. Our laws are much more just and fair. And I think they have been properly directed toward equal protection of the law. Now the great challenge is not so much the law, but acceptance of the law, and the full measure of the practice under the law.

For example, we have no discrimination in employment. That is the law. But a number of Negroes do not get employment today not because they are discriminated against, but because they are not trained or educated. Our next step is to implement the law by giving it meaning and substance in terms of individual performance.

Q—Do you think Negroes in the south, in Alabama specifically, are voting as a bloc as they have been coaxed to do?

A—Registration of Negroes was double what it was nationally over two years ago. There has been a great breakthrough in registration under the voting rights act. There is a tendency in some areas for them to vote in a bloc. In the northern cities I don't think you will find that too much. You may here and there but most of them will vote pretty much on the basis of what they think is their interest, just as other Americans.

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